

FEATURE

# New Marine carries on family’s Marine Corps legacy

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From the battlefields of wars past to the drill fields of Parris Island, Pfc. Jonathan T. Harton was born with a Marine legacy instilled in him. He had always thought about the Marine Corps because he’s been around Marines, literally, since the day he was born.

His grandfather, retired 1st Sgt. Charles T. Harton, enlisted in the Marine Corps shortly after the events at Pearl Harbor. His father Gregory T. Harton, a retired master sergeant, enlisted in

1979 and his mother, Elizabeth Harton, served two years in the early 80s. Their roles in the Marine Corps ranged from infantryman to drill instructors to aviation electricians and helicopter crew chiefs.

After years of debate, the 21-year-old decided to join his family’s elite past and enlisted in the Corps in late 2003. After three months of rigorous training, his family watched him march across Peatross Parade Deck with Platoon 1024, Delta Co., April 9, to become another link in his family’s ever growing chain of Marines.

“I grew up around Marines and have been around them my whole life,” said Jonathan. “Every Marine I’ve ever met has influenced me in one way or another, so the thought to

join their ranks has always been in the back of my mind.”

Prior to enlisting, Jonathan had other plans in mind. He decided to go off to college and get a degree in engineering, but after a couple of years he started thinking about the Marine Corps again.

“It got to the point to where I was going to college and making the grades, but not even having to be there,” he said. “I pretty much stopped going and was still passing all my classes. I just got tired of it ... I needed more of a challenge.”

It was at this point that Jonathan decided he had to change something. Less than year away from earning his degree, he enlisted to his family’s surprise, and chose to go into aviation electronics, just as his mother had done.

“I was shocked ... I didn’t see this coming at all,” said his father. “I thought it was great. Never in my wildest dreams did I ever expect to see him walk across that parade deck.”

“Even though his mother and myself and several other family members were Marines, we’ve always left it up to them,” added Gregory. “Growing up, he never really talked to us about [joining the Marine Corps]. It was very sudden. I mean, he was in school for three-and-a-half years!”

The sudden change of plans also came as a surprise to his mother, Elizabeth, who was

proud to see her son earn his Eagle, Globe and Anchor.

“It’s hard to describe seeing him in that uniform,” said Elizabeth. “We’ve recently had three nephews graduate recruit training, so we have been to these ceremonies before and they really meant something to me with us being a big Marine family. But when it’s your own child going through this and he chooses to follow in his family’s footsteps ... it’s something much more.”

Before he walked across the parade deck for the last time, Jonathan had to prove himself worthy of the title he had thirsted for.

“I was ready to go when I got here,” Jonathan said. “My dad and my grandpa were both drill instructors here at one point so they had a few things to pass before I left.”

His father served one tour with Delta Co. and his grandfather was a series chief drill instructor for two years, so they had a few words of advice to give him before he left.

“They told me to go in with a positive attitude and to get noticed for good things instead of the bad,” Jonathan said.

With those words his father gave him, Jonathan performed well during recruit training, which did not go unnoticed.

His Senior Drill Instructor, Staff Sgt. Will Cuellar, and lead Series Commander, 1st Lt. Teddy Colgate, chose him to march in graduation as the Lead Series guide for Delta Co.

“It felt good when I found out I was going to be lead series guide — the first one out on the parade deck during graduation,” said Jonathan.

This meant Jonathan would have to work even harder to gain his superiors’ respect.

“I tried even harder to perfect my drill movements,” he said. “I strove to be the best in my series commander’s



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**Following his graduation from recruit training April 9, Pfc. Jonathan T. Harton stands tall and proud in front of the Iwo Jima Monument on Parris Island. Harton is continuing his family’s decades-old legacy of serving in the Marines.**

eyes ... I wanted to prove I was worthy to carry our flag.”

Jonathan performed well and held the billet of Lead Series guide for the last nine weeks of recruit training.

“I can’t wait to finish [Marine Combat Training and Military Occupational Specialty school],” said Jonathan. “I think this will give me an idea of how I will like the Marine Corps.

Hopefully I will like it and be able to stay in and retire like my father and grandpa did. Enjoyment is everything ... if you enjoy doing something you could probably do it forever.”